

Celebrity endorsement in women's magazines: Evidence of a corporate social responsibility concern

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Atkins & Block (1989) ascertain that the audience will evaluate both the advertisements and the image of the product advertised more favourably when celebrities are used to endorse products. A celebrity endorser is “*any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement*” (McCracken, 1989, p. 310). Celebrity endorsements can: enhance consumers' recall of the products and brand names (Friedman & Friedman, 1979); increase credibility of the advertisements and stimulate a positive attitude towards the product or brand among a targeted consumer base (Kamins, Brand, Hoeks & Moe, 1989; Goldsmith, Lafferty & Newell, 2000); and influence the profitability of endorsed products by producing above-average sales and profits, resulting in declines in growth in sales and profits of competitors (Mathur, Mathur & Rangan, 1997).

Similarity, likeability and physical attractiveness are three source features that advertisers look for when selecting a celebrity endorser. If an advertisement is delivered by an endorser who shares similar needs, goals, interest and lifestyles with the audience, the message is easier for the audience to understand and accept (Kelman, 1961). Source credibility (Baker & Churchill, 1977; Kahle & Homer, 1985), and source attractiveness (Kamins et al. 1989; Bower & Landreth, 2001) predict celebrity endorsement effectiveness. The credibility of endorsers is affected by the match between endorsers and the products. McCracken (1989) developed a “meaning transfer process” model to elucidate the ways in which meanings can be transferred from celebrity endorsers to the brands. As through the meaning transfer process “*the meanings associated with the celebrity become associated with the product in the mind of the consumer and the consumer acquires the meaning in the product through consumption*” (Gwinner, 1997, p.147). Choi, Lee & Kim (2005) argue there must be a meaningful relationship or match up between the celebrity, the audience and the product known as the “match up hypothesis” (Kahle & Homer, 1985).

Advertisements are more effective when the dominant characteristics of the celebrity's image and the product's purpose are congruent (Kahle & Hommer, 1985; Kamins, 1990). If the source is considered as expert and trustworthy, it is more likely to persuade the audience

(Belch & Belch, 2001). Erdogan, Baker & Tagg (2001) found the importance of a celebrity's characteristics (trustworthiness, expertise, physical attractiveness, familiarity, and likeability) varies according to product type. Further, they argue "*Match-up Hypothesis research may have to extend beyond attractiveness and credibility toward a consideration and matching of the entire image of the celebrity with the endorsed brand and the target audience*" (Erdogan et al., 2001, p.41).

Given this plethora of research, it is unsurprising that between 1979 and 2004, the use of celebrity endorsers in advertisements increased from 15 percent to approximately 25% of all advertisements in the USA, and roughly 70% of advertisements in Japan (Hsu & McDonald, 2002; Silvera & Austad, 2004). Is there a downside however to the use of celebrity endorsers? When a celebrity is known for a particular role or kind of role might certain roles present corporate social responsibility (CSR) concerns. Hopkins defines CSR as being "*concerned with treating the stakeholders of the firm ethically or in a socially responsible manner. Stakeholders exist both within a firm and outside. The aim of social responsibility is to create higher and higher standards of living, while preserving the profitability of the corporation, for its stakeholders both within and outside the corporation*" (Hopkins, 2005, p214). One proposition is that the corporation's only responsibility is to maximize profits for shareholders, and that corporate responsibility runs counter to the philosophy of free enterprise. Proponents of CSR, however, argue that preoccupation with short-term financial returns results in profit loss over the long term, and that corporations ultimately succeed or fail on the basis of public trust and support. For them CSR adds value to and is in the interest of the business (Morton, 2003). What is clear is that companies can no longer afford to ignore CSR as it helps integrate companies into the social environment of communities by developing bonds between the organization, its employees and the local citizens. It helps a company build reputational capital (Briggs & Verma, 2006). Given this it is surprising that there is a paucity of research in relation to advertising and CSR, especially in relation to celebrity endorsed advertisements.

This study addresses this omission by analysing the prevalence (extent and frequency) of celebrity endorsed advertisements in women's magazines, the characteristics of the celebrity endorsers and the products that they endorse. Further it explores what is signified in their use by asking consumers about the meanings conveyed to answer the question "Are advertisers and their brands being socially responsible in the messages they convey to sell their products?" Specifically it addresses the messages, values and themes being conveyed by celebrity endorsement, comments on the implications of what is being signified and considers if there are corporate social responsibility concerns in the use of celebrity endorsers.

Nine monthly UK women's magazines published in July 2006 were randomly chosen for inclusion in the study: Vogue, Instyle, Cosmopolitan, Red, Eve, She, Marie Claire, Easy Living, and Company. The prevalence and nature of all advertising was systematically observed, recorded and quantified. Content analyses of these observations enabled product categories to be devised for all advertisements in order to identify the prevalence of celebrity endorsed advertisements within product categories. The most frequently deployed celebrity endorser was identified and a questionnaire devised using both closed and open questions to survey consumers as to the meanings signified by this celebrity's photograph. The questionnaire data were analysed using SPSS and content analyses for the open questions comparing descriptions for those who knew her with those who did not.

Celebrity endorsers were only found in advertisements of one page and over. Per monthly women's magazine, the average number of pages is 250, including 100 pages of adverts of whom 83 are of 1 page and over, while the average number of advertisements is 159 with 47% (N=67) being of 1 page and over. Across all magazines 606 1 page and over advertisements were found and eight product categories identified: fashion (bags/clothes/sunglasses/jewels/watches), beauty (make up/ skin care), perfume, hair products (shampoo/conditioner/ hair styling/ hair dyes), toiletries (shower gel/ toothpaste/ antiperspirant), foods (water/chocolate/alcohol), cars and consumer products (contact lenses/ cameras/ condom/ mobile phones/others) Some product types (bags/clothes/sunglasses/jewels) and product categories toiletries (shower gel/ toothpaste/ antiperspirant), foods (water/chocolate/alcohol), cars and consumer products (contact lenses/ cameras/ condom/ mobile phones/others) were dropped from further analyses at this point because they did not have celebrity endorsers.

Only 56 advertisements contained celebrity endorsers. Comparing advertisement type totals with those celebrity endorsed, hair dyes have the highest proportion of celebrity endorsements (45.45 %) followed by advertisements for shampoo/conditioner (25.71%), skin care (24.47%), make up (21.57%), hair styling (17.39%) watches (15.38%) and perfume only 5.71%. Forty-two of the celebrity endorsed advertisements fall under the L'Oreal corporation's remit with 23 of these advertisements being for skincare (Perfectslim = 9, Nutrisummer =5, Sublime Bronze =3, Solar =2, Collagen Filler =2, Revitalift =1, Pure Zone =1), 9 for hair conditioners (Elvive Anti-breakage =6, Elvive Nutrigloss =3), 2 for hairspray (Elvive Elnett), 5 for hair dye (Recital Preference =3, Couleur Experte =2) and 3 for make-up (Volume Shocking Mascara). Maybelline feature their Moisture Extreme Lipstick 6 times, Revlon their Fabulash twice as do Tissot their T+ watch and Softsheen. Carson their Dark & Lovely hair relaxer. Dior and Givenchy feature once each with their J'adore and Very, Irresistable perfumes respectively.

Of the 56 advertisements, 41 feature actors/actresses (73.21%), 13 employ models (23.21%), and two employ a singer as an endorser (3.56%). Thirty-two (57.14%) employ celebrities between 30 ~ 39; 21 (37.50%) feature celebrities age 20 ~ 29; and only 3 (5.36%) employ celebrities age over 39. Twenty-two feature American celebrities (39.29%), 21 employ European (37.5%), and nine Asian (16.07%). No UK celebrity endorser featured in the 9 randomly selected magazines. In terms of race/ethnicity, 24 of 56 advertisements (42.85%) employ White celebrities; 19 (33.93%) feature Hispanic celebrities; 6 (10.71%) a Chinese endorser; 4 (7.14%) spotlight Black celebrities and 3 (5.36%) employ an Indian celebrity. This suggests that the target audience as a whole is believed by advertisers to identify more strongly with and/or admire the characteristics of the American or European white women.

Most (N=10) of the 14 celebrities identified only endorse one type of product. Eva Longoria (skincare and hair dye), Penelope Cruz (shampoo/conditioner and hair styling), Charlize Theron (perfume and hair dye) and Laetitia Casta (skincare and shampoo/conditioner) endorse two types of products. Charlize Theron is the only celebrity to endorse 2 different brands (L'Oreal and Dior). Only Eva Longoria, Penelope Cruz, Laetitia Casta, and Scarlett Johansson appear more than once in same magazine. Celebrity endorsers are associated with particular brands which appear to match their personal characteristics. The petite and slim Eva Longoria is associated with Perfectslim, a body skincare cream to help get rid of cellulite while the fair skinned Claudia Schiffer is associated with Solar the anti-ageing suncare cream and the oldest celebrity endorser Andie McDowell with Revitalift skin care cream for ageing skin. Their physical characteristics "match" the products they endorse so "transferring associative meaning". As such they have "source credibility" and "source attractiveness", however, it could be argued that for the actresses their "source credibility" and "source attractiveness" to consumers is as much from the roles they play rather than who they are and their physical characteristics.

Eva Longoria, the actress, is the only celebrity to feature in all 9 magazines so she was chosen for survey purposes. Women were shown a photograph of Eva Longoria. They were asked if they knew who she was, and, if yes, how they knew her. Of the 147 women randomly surveyed Eva is known for her TV character with 81% stating they only know her in her role as "Gabrielle" in the TV programme "Desperate Housewives". "Eva" is described as "glamorous, beautiful, silky, stylish, and feminine" by those respondents who did not know who was in the photograph while those who know her as "Gabrielle" describe her as "sexy, attractive, confident, erotic, desirable, expensive, wilful, immoral, and selfish" This supports the actress's own perspectives. In an interview in the UK weekly magazine, *Now*, p73 dated 20th September 2006, Eva states that "I'm definitely not like Gabrielle, but I love playing her. She has no moral boundaries." In response to the question what does Eva

most like about Gabrielle, Eva states “She does want she wants, when she wants, and how she wants to do it”.

The women surveyed who know Eva Longoria only in her role as “Gabrielle” are “transferring associative meaning” and “matching” to Gabrielle’s personality characteristics rather than Eva’s personality characteristics as this is how they “know” her. Deploying Eva Longoria in an advertisement as a celebrity endorser is likely to elicit for these individuals associations to “Gabrielle’s” personality rather than “Eva’s” personality. They simply do not know Eva’s personality. Thus advertisers and their brands have an ethical concern with regard to corporate social responsibility. While L’Oreal may be happy to match its brand Perfectslim with Eva, a successful and attractive actress, and so attract women to their product by association with her celebrity lifestyle, are they equally happy for their brand to be associated with the selfish and amoral “Gabrielle”? Moreover, have they a corporate social responsibility to their consumers and society. Are the values typified by “Gabrielle’s” personality descriptors, as opposed to those typified by Eva Longoria’s, the messages that advertisers should be sending about and to women today to sell their products? While they may argue that they wish consumers to enter into “Eva’s” celebrity life-style by using her physical and personality characteristics to sell the product they advertise, it is found here that it is actually “Gabrielle’s” life-style consumers are identifying with to sell the product advertised.

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